

Maine Management Service: Tools

Part 3 of 3 – parts 1 and 2 of this series appeared in the November 2001 and January 2002 issues of the IPMA News.

Introduction

The Maine Management Service has been created to recruit, develop, and retain leaders for top management positions in State Government. The Service recognizes the importance of leadership among its present and future members and offers many excellent leadership development opportunities. Additionally, human resource decisions will be decentralized to each agency under a new civil service system that assures that all employment decisions are based on ability, qualifications and performance, while allowing each agency to tailor human resource programs to meet its needs.

This article will focus on the tools that have been developed to support a decentralized environment, to prepare leaders to lead, to recruit and select individuals who possess our leadership competencies, and plan for turnover of managers.

The Leadership Development System - designed to prepare managers to lead.

The purpose of our leadership development programs is to incorporate our leadership competency model into the business of managing state government. This will be done by enhancing the leadership competencies of existing managers, by building competencies in staff who aspire to leadership positions, and by providing development opportunities for new managers.

Managers will have greater flexibility and responsibility to manage their own careers and will be expected to work with their senior managers on their individualized developmental plans.

The Maine Leadership Institute is the start of a managers' leadership journey. Distinct from management training, this three-day program focuses exclusively on leadership. The program is a prerequisite for all other leadership development programs. Participants learn who they are as a leader via a 360° assessment of our leadership competencies, and through telling their own "leadership story." Faculty comprise current leaders in state government, and the Governor shares his personal insights on leadership with each class. Finally, participants develop a plan for their own development as a leader.

Of course developing leaders is not accomplished through training and development programs alone, but also requires hands-on application on the job. Each participant is given this challenge:

- Leading an organization requires a vision of what the future should look like, an understanding of what must be done to bring the organization to this new place, and (the hard part) motivating others to bring about the change.
- What is your personal vision for the future of your organization?

- Armed with a greater understanding of your personal leadership competencies and your vision for your organization, build a developmental plan: a plan to develop your organization and in the process build yourself as leader.

These individual plans are shared with other class members, and periodic “alumni” meetings will be used to share progress and solicit help and support from others.

Once managers have completed this program, a wide variety of developmental opportunities are available to them. A formal mentoring program matches people with leadership competencies to those that want to develop these competencies. Mentors model leadership competencies, offer advice, and act as sounding board. Mentors and protégés are matched for nine months, with an expectation to meet 5 hours per month. Mentoring is a rigorous exercise and mentors receive training to develop mentoring skills.

Temporary developmental assignments are 3 to 6 month assignments to another position within state government or another state or the federal government. Job partnership shadowing allows participants to shadow a business leader participant for one day and a business CEO shadows the state government leaders. Participants may job share along side another person within their agency or another state department.

Residential leadership programs, such as our existing Maine Executive Institute, will continue to be offered with closer ties to the leadership competency model. A “Leadership Maine” program currently offered by the Maine Development Foundation and offered mostly to private sector leaders will be expanded for public sector leaders; and a Harvard Business School Leadership Program for Maine leaders will be developed.

We will also facilitate networking through professional associations. We are negotiating an introductory, reduced membership fee for American Society for Public Administration. ASPA activities will be expanded to include joint MMS-ASPA programs. We also hope to develop an Executive Policy Leaders Academy/State Tour modeled after a successful program currently run for Maine’s new legislators. Additionally, ties with local leaders through the Maine Town & City Management Association will be developed.

One goal is to increase the number of Maine State Government managers with master’s degrees. We hope to develop a state tuition reimbursement policy for academic degree programs (currently each agency adopts its own policy) and promote enrollment into these programs.

Recruitment, Selection and Succession Planning

Screening candidates for technical or professional knowledge and experience is fairly easy, but it is not the most critical aspect of selection. Most people fail on the job not because they lack technical ability, but rather because they lack the necessary personal and interpersonal skills required to perform the job effectively. This is especially true for leaders of an organization. The Maine Management Service is founded on ten leadership competencies that distinguish excellent leaders from the average. Therefore, although technical or professional background

may be important for a given position, the primary focus is to recruit and select individuals who possess our leadership competencies.

Each MMS member attends a one-day training program at which competency-based interviewing techniques are introduced and practiced to build skill. Maine's interviewing model is based on "behavioral event interviewing," in which candidates are asked to tell a story about something that is important to them and that relates to one or more of our leadership competencies. Interviewers listen to the story and ask focused questions to help them understand how the candidate approaches difficult situations and acts on them. At key points in the interview, candidates are asked to expand on what they did, thought, said, or felt when faced with critical situations so that the interview team may gain this understanding.

In addition to the skill building program, each manager receives a handbook with helpful hints on how to market their job and organization, organize an effective recruitment and selection process, lists of potential recruitment sources, and legal issues related to employee selection.

We are currently developing methodologies for succession planning for agencies to tailor to meet their unique needs. Agencies will be provided with structured tools to identify critical leadership needs and to assess the current leadership competencies among their current managers. These assessments will allow agencies to structure development and recruitment programs to meet their needs.

Civil Service Rules for the Maine Management Service: Establishing the Right Environment

With the Maine Management Service, we are introducing state-of-the-art Human Resource applications and revising our civil service system to allow them to work effectively, while preserving merit principles. Human resource decisions are decentralized to each agency under this new civil service system that assures that all employment decisions are based on ability, qualifications and performance, while allowing each agency to tailor human resource programs to meet its needs. Prescriptive procedures are eliminated to the greatest extent possible.

Formal rule making is currently underway to establish new "principles-based" rules for classification and compensation, selection, training and development, reductions in force, and complaints, grievances and investigations.

We are also introducing a new classification structure of broad managerial job descriptions that focus on what all managers have in common, rather than focus on professional or programmatic differences. Broad classifications require broader flexibility in recruitment, selection and compensation to meet the unique needs of the person/position match, and these decisions have been decentralized to line agencies within certain parameters.

Detailed descriptions of our revised rules and new managerial classifications may be viewed on our web site at <http://www.state.me.us/bhr/mms/index.htm>.

Some Final Thoughts

The Maine Management Service is now well on the way to full implementation. Its development combined the introduction of state-of-the-art Human Resource applications and tools, organizational change management processes, skills building among managers and human resource professionals, and civil service reform. We learned some lessons along the way:

- Make it an all-inclusive effort
- Prepare for chaos and soul searching (and logistical nightmares)
- Spend a long time refining your message – communicate, communicate, communicate
- Have the courage to involve your detractors; they become your biggest champions
- Make a large commitment; time, people, resources
- Demonstrate tangible results early
- Get the right leaders involved
- Deliberately give up control (they'll give it right back to you)

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